USING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: References and Resources

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Educational programs designed for English language learners (ELLs), students whose first language is other than English, are typically based on objectives unique to the needs of thestudents. Evaluations of these programs and the students in them should include assessments that similarly attend to individual needs and accomplishments. Often, measures focus on language proficiency because of the need to place students appropriately. Language assessment is important; however, knowing how students are progressing in content knowledge is equally important and may be neglected or measured solely with standardized tests used for all students. Standardized tests, which are often multiple choice, norm-referenced, machine-scorable instruments, cannot on their own tell schools much about how ELLs are acquiring academic content. These instruments, if used as the sole indicators of ability and/or growth, may generate faulty comparisons between ELLs and others, create inaccurate guidelines for placement and identification for special services, and overlook what an ELL might be achieving.

While standardized measures are widely used to assess student progress, they can and should be complemented with other indicators that show how an ELL is learning, including alternative assessments. Alternative assessment, or nontraditional assessment, has become an umbrella term for anything other than standardized, multiple choice questions. Examples could include short answer response, extended response, observation, individual or group performance assessment, or portfolios. Performance assessment, a currently popular type of alternative assessment, requires the examinee to perform some type of task, which is then judged against preestablished criteria. Wheeler and Haertel list potential types of performance assessment, including "essays, portfolios, interviews, observations, work samples and group projects." (1) A portfolio, which could include evidence of performance assessments and standardized test scores, is defined by Arter and Spandel as "a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress or achievement in (a) given area (s)." (2) Examples of artifacts one might find within portfolios include writing samples, awards, assessment results, a tape of an interview, a series of photographs, or a drawing of an object.

Much has been written about alternative assessment. However, within this mass of information there are few references concerning use of these assessment methods with English language learners. This document contains a ready resource of articles, books, and other references, and information about projects that specifically discuss the assessment of ELLs using alternative methods. References are organized into five sections including, Issues/Policy, Techniques, Portfolio Assessment, Additional Nonprint Resources and General Sources on Alternative Assessment. These lists are not exhaustive, but will be updated periodically as new resources become available.

Please Note*: The number beginning with **ED** or **EJ** that follows many items is the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) document number and is shown to help those ordering documents via ERIC.*

ISSUES AND POLICY

Ascher, C. (1991, March). Testing bilingual students: Do we speak the same language? *PTA Today*, 7-9. (EJ 427846)

> Ascher discusses cultural and linguistic bias issues in bilingual testing, options for administering tests tobilingual students, and problems associated with these options. The article includes a short description of an alternative, dynamic assessment.

Baker, E.L. (1992, September). *Issues in policy, assessment and equity*. Paper presented at the Second National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues, Washington, D.C.. (ED 349823)

> National educational reform presents an unprecedented opportunity to combine bold policy options, technical knowledge and American concerns about equity and fairness. Discussant L.V. Pierce focuses on the purposes of alternative assessment, addressing implications of alternative assessment and high-stakes testing for English language learners, and the appropriateness and feasibility of using alternative assessment measures in high-stakes testing programs. Recommendations are proposed for making future studies on alternative assessment more relevant to the linguistic, cultural and academic needs of students learning English as their second language. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, (NCBE), Fax (800) 531-9347.

Baron, J.B. (1992, September). *SEA usage of alternativeassessment: The Connecticut experience*. Paper presented at the Second National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues, Washington, D.C.. (ED 349816)

> This paper discusses the use of alternative assessments at the state level with a focus on the Connecticut experience. Alternative assessment leads to students monitoring their own progress, teachers making more informed decisions about their students' levels of understanding, and policy makers having access to accountability data that more closely mirror the skills and applications valued by society. Discussant M.J. Habermann offers comments on the implications of performance-based testing for students in bilingual education programs. Available from NCBE, Fax (800)531-9347.

Freeman, Y. and Freeman, D. (1992, January). *Portfolio assessment for bilingual learners*. Bilingual Basics, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Bilingual Education Special Interest Group.

> This brief article outlines characteristics of portfolios and discusses why they are important for second language learners. Common questions about portfolios are addressed in a Q/A format.

Hafner, A. and Ulanoff, S. (1994, Summer). *Strategies for assessing English learners: One district's approach*. Education and Urban Society, 26 (4).

> This article outlines a case study of language arts assessment of English language learners in South Los Angeles. The case details how teachers developed holistic scoring rubrics for student reading, listening, speaking and writing in English and Spanish as they integrated language arts

curriculum with assessment. The study found that students in the school did better on the teacher-designed tests than on state and national multiple choices tests; that the higher the student's grade level, the higher the chance was that student passed the tests; and that students taught in Spanish primarily passed the reading test compared to students taught primarily in English. Implications of the pilot for curriculum-embedded assessment and its role as a dynamic guide for instruction are discussed. Available from Sage Publications, P.O. Box 5084, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359, (805) 499-0721.

Mitchell, R. (1992). *Testing for learning*. New York: Free Press/Macmillan.

This overview of alternative assessments as they are developing in the U.S. begins with a critique of traditional (multiple-choice) testing and continues with an examination of performance assessments. It discusses assessment plans in a variety of content areas using a variety of methods (including portfolios). Currently operating programs throughout the country are cited as examples. The book includes discussions of the impact of immigrant students, teachers' roles and involving parents and the community. Available from Macmillan Publishing Co., 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022, (212) 702-2000.

LaCelle-Peterson, M. and Rivera, C. (1994, Spring). *Is it Real for All Kids? A Framework for Equitable Assessment Policies for English Language Learners*. Harvard Educational Review, 64 (1).

The authors argue that unless educational reformers reflect seriously on the implications of assessment reform for students whose first language is not English, little meaningful change will occur. They present a demographic profile of ELLs, propose a definition of educational equity and excellence, and outline the range of educational goals the definition implies. Arguing that it is erroneous to assume that changes that affect monolingual English students favorably will automatically do the same for ELLs, the authors offer recommendations for more appropriate assessment policy and practice for these students.

National Center for Fair and Open Testing. (1990). *Standardized tests and our children: A guide to testing reform*. Cambridge, MA: Author. (ED 335383)

This 32-page pamphlet explains the functions, uses and dangers of standardized tests and alternative methods for evaluating students. It includes sections on parents' rights and testing terms. Available in English and Spanish. Also available is a 'Selected annotated bibliography on language minority assessment'. Available from National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 342 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139-1802, (617) 864-4810.

TECHNIQUES

Barrs, M., Ellis, S., Hester, H., & Thomas, A. (1988). *The primary language record: Handbook for teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The Primary Language Record (PLR) is an assessment tool used by teachers to collect and organize evidence of a student's language and literacy development. Teachers use the PLR as they observe a student reading, writing, speaking and listening while engaging in various classroom activities. This handbook explains the hows and whys of literacy acquisition and development and includes sample recording forms that are being adapted for several areas (i.e.,

math, English as a Second Language) and grade levels. For more information on language record adaptations, contact: Special Initiatives-Subject Matter Projects, 9500 Gillman Dr., La Jolla, CA 92093 (619) 534-3400.

Calderon, M. and Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (1992, Fall). *Dynamic assessment of teachers and language minority students through cooperative learning*. Cooperative Learning, 13 (1), 27-29.

Report of a project in which teachers and researchers worked together to develop a holistic assessment tool to measure language minority students progress in cooperative instruction models. The group developed eight assessment techniques, using student portfolios as a unifying force.

Damico, J.S. (1992, September). *Performance assessment of language minority students*. Paper presented at the Second National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues, Washington, D.C.. (ED 349815)

The characteristics necessary for successful performance assessment, the assessment process, and actual assessment techniques are discussed, including ways to provide a rich description of the individual student's communicative performance and underlying language proficiency. The paper argues that assessment procedures designed and implemented for language minority students have to be more authentic. Available from NCBE, fax (800) 531-9347.

Fairfax County Public Schools. *Assessment/evaluation in the language arts classroom*. Fairfax, VA: Author.

Teachers in successful reading/writing classrooms concentrate on what their students know, rather than the number of items missed or incomplete in a given assessment exercise. The assessment/evaluation 'secrets' shared by successful teachers center around three issues: (1) teachers must be professional decision makers, (2) classroom observations must be documented, and (3) students must be involved in the process. Six suggestions for documenting classroom observations of students are offered, including performance portfolios and other alternative assessments. Reproducible copies of suggested instruments are in an appendix. Available from Elementary Language Art , FCPS, 3705 Crest Dr., Annandale, VA 22003, (703) 846-8608.

Garcia, Y. and Montes, F. (1992, April). *Authentic assessment for limited-English-proficient students*. Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) Newsletter. San Antonio:

IDRA.

Ways to assess bilingual students, focusing on authentic assessment, in which students perform tasks that demonstrate ongoing knowledge, are discussed. Included are eight key features of authentic assessment. Available from the IDRA, 5835 Callaghan, Suite 350, San Antonio, TX 78228, (210) 684- 8180.

Hamayan, E.V., Kwiat, J.A., & Perlman, R. (1985). *Assessment of language minority students: A handbook for educators*. Springfield, IL: Illinois State Board of Education.

Intended for school district personnel, this handbook provides specific guidelines for the identification of language minority students at the elementary and secondary levels and discusses useful assessment procedures to determine English language proficiency. A recommended method is the use of informal approaches, such as holistic assessment, and the use of teacher-made tools based on the school district's curriculum. These more informal approaches are preferred to more traditional assessment tools. Included as appendices are sample survey and test forms, rating sheets, materials for administering the Boston Cloze Tests, a bibliography of tests for limited English proficient students, and other related material. Available from the Illinois State Board of Education, 100 N. First St, Springfield, IL 62777 (217)782-4321.

Holt, D. (1992). *Assessing success: Alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation in family English literacy programs*. Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office. (ED 351363)

This guide helps Family English Literacy Programs design and use alternative approaches to assessment and evaluation. It explains the concepts, presents concrete suggestions for designing and using alternative assessment instruments and procedures, and focuses on a limited number of assessment approaches. Available from the California Department of Education, Bilingual Education Office, 721 Capitol Mall, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento,CA 95814 (916) 657-2451.

King, D. (1992). *Assessment and evaluation in bilingual, multicultural classrooms*. In Assessment and Evaluation in Whole Language Programs, Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

King describes principles and methodology of whole language instruction, which is an integrated reading/writing method of teaching focused on learning a language by using it in authentic activities. The article includes such examples of whole-language evaluation in bilingual classes as observational records, writing samples, audiotapes, profiles, records of student reading, and self-evaluation. Available from Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 480 Washington St., Norwood MA 02062, (617) 762-5577.

Navarrete, C., Wilde, J., Nelson, C., Martinez, R., & Hargett, G. (1990, Summer). *Informal assessment in educational evaluation: Implications for bilingual education programs*. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education Program Information Guide Series (No.3). Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. (ED 337041)

This guide reviews some of the problems associated with standardized testing, describes alternative assessment approaches, and discusses how these approaches might be employed by bilingual educators to supplement standardized test data. Guidelines are presented for ensuring the validity and reliability of the informal assessments and for combining and scoring different techniques. Portfolio assessment, an approach to organizing and summarizing student data, is described. Available from NCBE, fax (800) 531-9347.

Rueda, R. and Goldenberg, C. (1992). *Rating instructional conversations: a guide*. Educational Practice Report, (No. 4). Washington, DC: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. (ED 348888)

This report outlines efforts to operationalize more fully the instructional conversation (IC)

approach to fostering literacy in school-age language minority students and describes the IC Rating Scale, an observational tool to examine classroom-based reading comprehension. The IC approach is based on early work in the Hawaiian Kamehameha Elementary Education Project (KEEP), and other theories of classroom-based research in reading comprehension. Preliminary data on the reliability and validity of the IC scale are presented; cautions and unresolved questions to consider when using the scale are discussed. Available from CAL, 1118 22nd St, NW, Washington, DC, 20037 (202) 429-9292.

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Brummett, C. (1993, Spring). *Portfolios in ESL: Finding the hidden treasure*. New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Idiom, 23 (1), 1.

This article breaks portfolios down into two types: process portfolios, which display a collection of unfinished and finished products, and showcase portfolios, which contain only the best works. Brummett discusses conditions necessary for use of portfolios, parent involvement issues, selection of items for a portfolio, self-evaluation and goal-setting.

Fairfax County Public Schools. *ESL Assessment Guide*. Fairfax, VA: Author.

In the fall of 1991, the Fairfax County Public Schools ESL programs began using a portfolio-like approach to student assessment. This ESL Assessment Guide provides information describing the elements of this process from entry testing of language minority students to exit criteria for ESL students leaving the program. The assessment is comprised of several components, including: English language proficiency assessment (oral, listening, reading and writing), home language proficiency assessment, and an evaluation of mathematics proficiency. The guide contains criteria for pre-K through 12 assessment. Available from the ESL Office, FCPS, 3705 Crest Dr., Annandale, VA 22003, (703) 846-8632.

Freeman, Y. & Freeman D. (1991, January). *Portfolio assessment: An exciting view of what bilingual children can do*. BEOutreach, 6-7.

This article examines portfolio assessment as it relates to bilingual students. The advantages of portfolio assessment over traditional assessment for these students are discussed. Available from the California Dept. of Education, Bilingual Education Office, 721 Capitol Mall, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento,CA (916)657-2451; or NCBE, fax (800) 531-9347.

French, R.L. (1992, September). *Portfolio assessment and LEP students*. Paper presented at the Second National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues, Washington, DC. (ED 349817)

French notes that new student assessment techniques, including portfolios, can provide new and often better information about student performance and development and about program performance than has previously been available. The author says there appears to be great potential in the use of portfolios with limited English proficient students; however, the value is yet to be determined. Available from NCBE, fax (800)531-9347.

Gomez, M.L., Graue, M.E., & Bloch, M.N. (1991, December). *Reassessing portfolio assessment: Rhetoric and reality*. Language Arts, 68(8), 620-628. (EJ 435623)

This article examines what is said about portfolio assessment and what actually happened when one school tried to implement it. It discusses implementation in a multicultural classroom, including one with English language learners and the value of teacher observation. Available from the NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801, (800) 369-6283.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1992, September). *Holistic writing assessment of LEP students*. Paper presented at the Second National Research Symposium on Limited English Proficient Student Issues,Washington, DC. (ED 349830)

The author describes the available types of holistic writing assessment, placing these on a continuum. She considers a wide range of contexts, from individual classroom evaluation to program-wide and statewide performance and accountability testing. Multiple trait assessment is discussed, as is the use of portfolio assessment. Available from NCBE, fax (800) 531-9347.

Heath, D. (1992). *Cross-cultural portfolios for ESL students*. Portfolio News, 4(1), 6.

Students in the San Dieguito Union High School District Project Write bilingual program are making strides in discovering new avenues of communication through portfolio assessment. The ESL portfolio encompasses a variety of writing samples, including autobiographical, writing-to-learn samples, and creative writing. Along with promoting multicultural awareness, the portfolio process is advantageous to bilingual students because it promotes equity, self-esteem, recognition and affirmation of the native language. Available via written request only from Win Cooper, Teacher Education Program, University of California at San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0070.

Johns, A. (1992). *Portfolios and ESL programs*. Portfolio News, 4(1), 6.

Portfolios provide ESL students with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities to draft and revise papers over time, to reflect upon their first and second language writing experiences, and to bring to the ESL classroom examples of work in their first languages. It is claimed that portfolios are much more essential to the success of bilingual and culturally diverse students than for any other student population. Available via written request only from Win Cooper, Teacher Education Program, University of California at San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0070.

Johns, J. and VanLeirsburg, P. (1992). *What teachers have been telling us about literacy portfolios*. Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University. (ED 348657)

This article outlines results of a survey of teachers about their perceptions of using portfolios. The respondents included English as a Second Language teachers. Teachers indicated they felt portfolios were growing in use, that portfolios should be used for decision making for language arts, that problems with implementation of portfolios were diminishing as practice spread, and that student writing samples were the most common choice of item to include in portfolios.

Navarrete, C.J. (1990). *Reaching out: Using portfolios to combine formal and informal assessments*. EAC-West News, 4(1), 1, 8-9.

This article praises portfolios for their ability to organize and summarize student data for

programs interested in combining standardized tests with more informal assessments that capture the full range of student performance. Portfolios provide an opportunity to collect and measure the best efforts of students and encourage evaluating students in more than one learning context. Guidelines for collecting and organizing are given. Available from EAC West, 121 Tijeras NE, 2100, Albuquerque, NM, (800) 247-4269 or (505) 242-7447.

O'Malley, J.M. & Pierce, L. V. (1991, November). *Using portfolio and alternative assessment with LEP students*. NCBE Forum, 15(1), 1-2.

This article briefly discusses the advantages of using portfolio and alternative assessment with Limited English Proficient students and what materials the assessments might include. Available from NCBE, fax (800)531-9347.

Pierce, L. V. & O'Malley, J.M. (1992). *Performance and portfolio assessment for language minority students*. Program Information Guide, (No. 9). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. (ED 346747)

Performance assessment procedures and a portfolio assessment framework for monitoring the language development of language minority students in the upper elementary and middle grades are presented. Performance assessment applies to achievement-related behaviors exhibited by the student (e.g., communication or reading skills) and achievement-related products that students develop, such as written reports or projects. Procedures are provided for the design of performance assessment tasks and instruments These include oral language, reading, and writing assessment, developing anecdotal records, and self-assessment in language proficiency and learning strategies. Available from NCBE, fax (800)531-9347.

ADDITIONAL NONPROFIT RESOURCES

The Alternative Assessment In Practice Data Base, Center for the Study of Evaluation/National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CSE/CRESST).

Currently, the database contains more than 250 entries on alternative assessment practices by states, individuals and organizations. Updated annually, the database includes specific descriptions contacts and availability information. To retrieve the database online, a system must have access to Internet and to Gopher software, such as Turbo Gopher. The address is gopher.cse.ucla.edu. Contact Ron Dietel, CSE/CRESST, School of Education, 405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024-4108, (310) 206-1532.

New York City Public Schools. *The Accountability Project*. Office of Research, Education and Assessment, New York City Public Schools, Brooklyn, NY.

Funded jointly by the New York City Public Schools, Office of Research, Education and Assessment, and the Fund for New York City Public Education, a private organization, The Accountability Project works with selected schools in New York City to develop alternative assessments. This project is part of a larger consortium called the 'New York Assessment Network' which examines ways of using the Primary Language Record method with English language learners to assess and develop literacy in both English and the student's native language. For more information, contact Maureen Houtrides at the NYCPS, Office of Research,

Education and Assessment, 110 Livingston St., Room 735, Brooklyn, NY 11201, (718) 935-3284.

GENERAL SOURCES ON ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

Arter, J. and Spandel, V. (1992, Spring). *Using portfolios of student work in instruction and assessment.* Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice 11 (1), 36-44. (EJ 445294)

An instructional module, this article defines portfolio, discusses potential problems from use of portfolios, and outlines portfolio design questions. The article includes a self-test to take before planning a portfolio system and an extensive list of resources and references. Available from the NCME, 1230 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036-3078 (202)223-9318.

Herman, J., Aschbacher, P., and Winters, L. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment.* Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This book bases alternative assessment practices in cognitive learning theory and a model of assessment that integrates it with instruction. Detailed tips include how to design tasks, set criteria, and check for reliability and validity of alternative programs. Available from ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314, (703) 549-9110.

Portfolio Assessment Clearinghouse. *Portfolio News*.

A quarterly newsletter discussing issues pertinent to portfolio assessment and individual projects using portfolios. Includes an 'Information Exchange' network, a regularly updated list of schools, districts and organizations around the country involved in portfolio assessment. Newsletter subscriptions are available for $25.00 per year. For more information, contact: Win Cooper, Teacher Education Program, University of California at San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 92093-0070. Requests for back issues should be made in writing to this address.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994, Winter). *ERIC Review*, (3)1.

This entire issue is devoted to performance-based assessment. It includes information on assessment techniques, national assessment reform efforts, recommendations for administrators working with performance-based assessment, a description of one schools' efforts with performance-based assessment, and an extensive alternative assessment reading list and resource organization list. Available from ACCESS ERIC, 1600 Research Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850, (800) LET-ERIC.

Worthen, B. (1993, February). *Is your school ready for alternative assessment?* Phi Delta Kappan, 74 (6), 455-456. (EJ 457278)

This article outlines ten conditions that are important to a school's readiness to embrace alternative assessment. Conditions include staff openness to innovations, clarity about desired student outcomes, and content or curricula ill-suited to traditional tests. Available from Phi Delta Kappan, 408 N. Union, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402, (812) 339-1156.

NOTES

1. Patricia Wheeler and Geneva Haertel, *Resource Handbook on Performance Assessment and Measurement: A Tool for Students, Practitioners, and Policymakers* (Berkeley, CA: The Owl Press, 1993), p. 16.

2. Judith Arter and Vicki Spandel, *Using Portfolios of Student Work in Instruction and Assessment*, Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 1992, p. 36.

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